United Nations A/HRC/30/NGO/70

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 September 2015

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirtieth session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 August 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.15-15039(E)

Please recycle

Situation of indigenous activists

Coal, oil and water power fuel economic growth worldwide. For companies and governments, economic development oftentimes trumps environmental protection and human rights.

The first victims are often the approximately 450 million members of around 5,000 indigenous peoples. Their way of life is so interconnected with an unharmed environment that they have become the most dedicated environmentalists. According to an April 2014 report by the NGO "Global Witness", each week two environmental activists are murdered; 40 per cent of them are indigenous activists. The shadow figure is estimated to be much higher since many activists disappear in inaccessible areas and are never found.

The following three examples highlight the difficulties of indigenous activists. Of course they do not represent all the difficulties indigenous activists are facing today.

Indigenous activists in the Philippines
The decision by the government of the Philippines to declare 9 August to a "National Indigenous Peoples Day" is commendable. The 110 indigenous groups in the Philippines make up for 15 million of the total population of 102 million.

Yet there is no other country in Asia where so many indigenous activists pay for their activism with their life. Since 2010, 48 environmental activists were murdered in the Philippines. 30 of the 48 were indigenous activists. Between October 2014 and June 2015 alone, 23 indigenous environmental activists and leaders of traditional communities were murdered by death squads in the north of Mindanano because they campaigned against mining projects and for the protection of the environment.

The Lumad civilian population has been traumatized by the events. The village of Dao near th city of San Fernando in short succession lost two village chiefs: in 2012 village chief Jimmy Liguyon. His successor Fausto Bacliran was killed just a few months later. Despite a warrant against him, the one responsible for the killing of Jimmy Liguyon, a former rebel commander has not been apprehended.

The killing of the Catholic priest Fausto Tentorio on 17 October 2011 has not led to the apprehension of the alleged perpetrators.

The indigenous environmental activist Fausto Orasan was murdered on 14 September, 2014, near the city of Cagayan de Oro. Snipers shot him when he was on his motorbike driving through the village of Tuburan. The 64-year old human rights activist had been on his way to a meeting in Cagayan de Oro in order to mobilize against mining projects. There had already been an attempt to murder him the same year.

In Mindanao's south Lumad leaders also become victims of violence. The indigenous activist Ricky Basig was shot on his porch on 25 June, 2015.

Killing of Edwin Chota in Peru
Edwin Chota, the leader of the Ashaninka community Saweto, and three members of his community were found murdered on 1 September, 2014, in the rainforest. The widows and children of the four victims were forced to flee to the nearby town of Pucallpa. The illegal loggers have encircled the Ashaninka who stayed in Saweto and are threatening the indigenous community.

Chota had worked towards a legal protection of the territory of the Ashaninka and the protection of the forests for years. Just recently, he had made important progress which could have made it difficult for the timber mafia to access the area.

Chota had been on his way to the Brazilian Ashaninka community Apiwtxa on foot, together with Jose Rios Pérez, Leoncio Quinticima Melendez and Francisco Pinedo. Following the two-day march, they wanted meet up to develop a joint strategy against the threat posed by illegal logging and drug trafficking in their area. Chota was forced to seek protection on Brazilian territory before. His commitment had earned him powerful enemies. In 2012, he was threatened

already. In April 2013, he stated in an interview for National Geographic: "They threaten us. They intimidate us. They have guns".

Russia: the case of the "Chukotka Association of traditional hunters"

An example of the Russian "foreign agent law" concerns the association of hunters on Chukotka which aims to preserve the traditional way of life of the peoples of the North. There are only a few civil society initiative on Chukotka. The indigenous Chukchi people live from hunting and fishing. Their way of life is the basis of their culture and identity. In order to preserve this, they founded the "*Chukotka* Association of traditional hunters". This organization is the only one that receives foreign funding on Chukotka. Its chairman Eduard Zdor was invited to a meeting with representatives of the ministry of justice for 5 December, 2014. Zdor was warned that his association might be included in the list of "foreign agents". The case has not been resolved at this moment.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to call on all governments to respect the rights of indigenous peoples enshrined in UN Conventions and ensure their protection.